

that were considered in reaching a conclusion about the severity of the mental impairment(s). The decision must include a specific finding as to the degree of limitation in each of the functional areas described in paragraph (c) of this section.

(5) If the administrative law judge requires the services of a medical expert to assist in applying the technique but such services are unavailable, the administrative law judge may return the case to the State agency or the appropriate Federal component, using the rules in § 404.941 of this part, for completion of the standard document. If, after reviewing the case file and completing the standard document, the State agency or Federal component concludes that a determination favorable to you is warranted, it will process the case using the rules found in § 404.941(d) or (e) of this part. If, after reviewing the case file and completing the standard document, the State agency or Federal component concludes that a determination favorable to you is not warranted, it will send the completed standard document and the case to the administrative law judge for further proceedings and a decision.

[65 FR 50774, Aug. 21, 2000; 65 FR 60584, Oct. 12, 2000, as amended at 71 FR 16444, Mar. 31, 2006; 75 FR 62680, Oct. 13, 2010; 76 FR 24806, May 3, 2011]

§ 404.1520b How we consider evidence.

After we review all of the evidence relevant to your claim, including medical opinions (see § 404.1527), we make findings about what the evidence shows. In some situations, we may not be able to make these findings because the evidence in your case record is insufficient or inconsistent. We consider evidence to be insufficient when it does not contain all the information we need to make our determination or decision. We consider evidence to be inconsistent when it conflicts with other evidence, contains an internal conflict, is ambiguous, or when the medical evidence does not appear to be based on medically acceptable clinical or laboratory diagnostic techniques. If the evidence in your case record is insufficient or inconsistent, we may need to take additional actions, as we explain

in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section.

(a) If all of the evidence we receive, including all medical opinion(s), is consistent and there is sufficient evidence for us to determine whether you are disabled, we will make our determination or decision based on that evidence.

(b) If any of the evidence in your case record, including any medical opinion(s), is inconsistent, we will weigh the relevant evidence and see whether we can determine whether you are disabled based on the evidence we have.

(c) If the evidence is consistent but we have insufficient evidence to determine whether you are disabled, or if after weighing the evidence we determine we cannot reach a conclusion about whether you are disabled, we will determine the best way to resolve the inconsistency or insufficiency. The action(s) we take will depend on the nature of the inconsistency or insufficiency. We will try to resolve the inconsistency or insufficiency by taking any one or more of the actions listed in paragraphs (c)(1) through (c)(4) of this section. We might not take all of the actions listed below. We will consider any additional evidence we receive together with the evidence we already have.

(1) We may recontact your treating physician, psychologist, or other medical source. We may choose not to seek additional evidence or clarification from a medical source if we know from experience that the source either cannot or will not provide the necessary evidence. If we obtain medical evidence over the telephone, we will send the telephone report to the source for review, signature, and return;

(2) We may request additional existing records (see § 404.1512);

(3) We may ask you to undergo a consultative examination at our expense (see §§ 404.1517 through 404.1519t); or

(4) We may ask you or others for more information.

(d) When there are inconsistencies in the evidence that we cannot resolve or when, despite efforts to obtain additional evidence, the evidence is insufficient to determine whether you are disabled, we will make a determination or decision based on the evidence we have.

[77 FR 10655, Feb. 23, 2012]